

## New Hampshire's First State House Project: Summary Sheet



Model depicting the existing 18th-century elements of New Hampshire's First State House. *TMS Architects*

New Hampshire's First State House was built in 1758 in Portsmouth as the seat of New Hampshire's colonial government. Dismantled in 1836, one third of the building's frame was removed to Portsmouth's Court Street and survived after being converted into a townhouse. In 1969, the State of New Hampshire purchased the building and moved it to Strawberry Banke Museum to await restoration. After two decades of delay, the structure was removed from Strawberry Banke Museum in 1990. An historic structures report was prepared and the building elements marked, placed into storage, and moved to Concord, NH. The 480 numbered pieces currently in storage comprise the remaining eighteenth-century elements from a two-and-one-half-story 30'x30'6" portion of the original 80'x30' State House structure. The components consist mostly of major framing

members, sheathing, and floor boards. Additional material in storage—the majority of surviving architectural elements—date to the rehabilitation of the structure in the 1830s.

When the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded an Economic Development Initiative Grant for New Hampshire's First State House (FSH) Project in 2007 the project included but was not limited to studying the possibility of reconstructing the artifacts for use as a visitors' center for the Seacoast Region—the area in which it was originally built in 1758. Since that time, however, other organizations have stepped up their efforts to promote heritage tourism in the Seacoast that generally fulfill that purpose. Therefore, the study to evaluate ways in which the history and values of the resource can benefit New Hampshire was broadened.

With the completion of assessments by the project's conservator and architect, New Hampshire gained a more detailed, and more accurate, understanding of the building pieces in its possession. This invaluable information helped guide the next steps in the project. These included an evaluation of the interpretive potential of the FSH with recommendations for engaging and relevant interpretive models for the architectural elements, and an assessment of the economic viability and community benefits of various interpretation or reuse options for the FSH. In addition, a series of public sessions and online surveys provided opportunities for a range of public comment.

Results of these studies can be seen on the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources website at [http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/state\\_house.htm](http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/state_house.htm).



Elements of New Hampshire's First State House displayed for conservator's assessment. *NH Division of Historical Resources*

Consultants who are recognized as authorities in their respective fields carried out each phase of the project, including facilitation of public meetings. As the project came to a close, the planning team synthesized the gathered data and public comment and compiled recommendations for pursuing a plan of action to create greater opportunities for the public throughout New Hampshire to enjoy and benefit from the resource's history and values. The final recommendation is a phased, multi-component approach that uses the First State House to supplement and support historic sites and stories around the state. It is detailed in the project's final report which can be seen at [http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/documents/fsh\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/documents/fsh_final_report.pdf). For more information on New Hampshire's First State House Project or to share your ideas or comments, please contact us at [preservation@dcr.nh.gov](mailto:preservation@dcr.nh.gov).